Introduction

Even before studying at Piet Zwart, I was an artist who aims to peak the aesthetic value on my artworks. I prefer images arousing positive mood to the audience and I always have tried to involve such feature in my works. Like Henri Matisse once said that 'I wanted my art to have the effect of a good armchair upon a tired businessman'. (Hughes,1980) I want to depict an ideal world through my work which contributes to the more beautiful world. I followed the public's ideal beauty which can be friendly regardless of audience. Giving a relax moment with friendliness to the audience is one of the strongest motivations that fuels me to create artworks. Interestingly, my usage of colors rather seems unusual or abnormal. Rather than covering a dense forest with the greenness of leaves, I color it with artificial colors which are rarely seen in nature. I always liked the freshness from such irregular color scheme. A Korean art critic Moon-Jung Lee shows Matisse in her recent book <Between the revulsion and the captivation>(2018) as an example of one of the various attempts in the 20th century finding new style of art which is resisted the provincial traditional art. Matisse pioneered a revolutionary use of color and form, refusing to accept that color must reflect the real world. Even though his paintings described as wild beasts - "Fauves" because of their radical daring and undulated colors, their simplified devices, and their impulsiveness (quoted in Locke), it reflected the convinced spirit of the artists who preferred exotic and disparate concepts and craved hard to be the leaders in the age. Which, obviously, led me to be thrilled about his paintings, as I also prefer such spirt on colors to be in my artwork.

When I worked for my client in 2018, I had to think about the color of my works once again. The client was Lotte World Mall which is the tallest mall in Seoul. I was asked to make four different illustrations representing each season for their marketing campaign. All the concept and the plot were prepared and my job was to visualize them into an artwork. With the given concept, I had to create different characters, objects, and even a whole new space. This project was targeted to the general public visiting the mall and the purpose of it was to present positive cultural experiences to the public by delivering the ideal images of each season. While proceeding the project, the client firmly requested to use specific color tones for each season. For example, spring should be with pastel colors, summer should be with blue which feels cool, Autumn should be with tone-down gradated color to have depth and so on. As the project should embrace various types of audience, the client stuck to use only stable colors which I resisted. Their passive and inflexible manners caused conflicts with with my artistic preference on colors. I was dissatisfied with all the results since it did not have the colors that I wanted. Through this experience, I strongly considered how valuable the colors are on my works.

One of my strength, or sometimes disadvantage, was using the colors based on my intuition. Through this research, I would like to find out substantiated reasons for my usage of color. This is my first time doing such research for an artwork. Thus, I tried to focus on developing the concept or

idea step by step based on the research results. As I was not used to building up an idea gradually, to be honest, I tended to generalize my thought too easily and assumed the conclusion by only reading some materials, not testing with images, and it hindered to make my research go deeper. As a solution, I decided to have interviews with people to listen to what people are saying without a fixed conclusion and prejudices. As a result, It helped me to develop my idea step by step and get out of my desk. Most of all, I realized that my assumptions could be different from the public's. I strongly felt that listening to other people's thoughts helps me to enjoy the process not clinging on having an end-result. It also helped me to approach my design in different ways than I anticipated.

This research proceeded in different rounds of interviews. After each round, all the answers are analyzed and categorized based on their similarities, which would be the main inspirations for the next interview questions.

Note: the sample of this experiment is very limited. This is not intended as a 'scientific research' but rather an 'artistic field research'. I have set up a series of "experiments" in order to hear random people's opinions.

Chapter 1: ???

In the early phase of my research, the main question was 'Can we get rid of stereotypical interpretations of color?' Probably, it was because I wanted to criticize the conservative stereotypical use of colors, especially in the commercial field which I once was involved in. Kees van Dongen, one of the leaders of Fauvism, remarked, "because Impressionist held certain principles, For us, there was nothing like that; we merely thought their colors were a bit dull. (Hughes,1980, p.82)" In his words, 'certain principles' do coincide with what I say 'stereotypical use of colors', I also admitted that it is a bit dull.

Moreover, I assumed that we are controlled by the typical meanings of the colors which are created by somewhere and someone without enough supportive reasons. When I searched 'Color's meaning' on the internet, It was not difficult to face vast information and studies saying that certain color arouses certain emotion or mood. In addition, there is the study claim to be able to use light in the form of color to balance "energy" lacking from a person's body, whether it be on physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental levels, which is called Color therapy. In Faber Birren's book <Color Psychology And Color Therapy; A Factual Study Of The Influence of Color On Human Life>(1950), he described the theory as 'The study of color, unfortunately, does not always lend itself to facts and proofs (p.138), There is little evidence so far to substantiate these claims (p.140).' Surprisingly, even though the early scientist's perspectives on the ideas dealt with in the book, Birren clearly said that 'Many notions about the effect of color on the human mind are mere absurdities. (p.172)'

Nonetheless, these kinds of concepts on color are being used as a powerful marketing strategy in the commercial field. When I worked for the mall which I mentioned, I was asked to use a specific color 'Ultra Violet' since it is the color was selected as the color of 2018 nominated by Pantone

purporting the color offers mindfulness practices in today's over-stimulated world. Whether the idea is fruitful or not, their demand using the color seemed not to make sense for me since I believe that color should have an obvious reason to represent a certain concept. I felt that I felt that this is a very insular view considering the color by only the created meanings rather than the image itself, which hinders the artist's desired message to be fully understood by the audience. John Berger said, "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe."(1972, p.8). This triggered me to explore the following issue: what will happen after they have admitted or understand that they have the stereotypical image on colors? Then can we accept daringness coming from dissonant images easily?

Ch 1.1 The First experiment: <What is your favorite color?>

Through the first experiment, I wanted to find out how the color is perceived and interpreted in our daily lives. I prepared a question-list regarding colors, such as their favorite and least favorite colors. Through the questions, I wanted to see what people would say about those colors in their daily lives and the emotions that particular colors evoke. In addition, I a brought some edited images to check people's reaction with some questions.

The first experiment was comprised of multiple image sets. I chose apple(fig1) and toilet paper(fig2) to see how people would react on "consuming" objects with unfamiliar colors, and Van Gogh's artwork(fig3) to see how people would feel if the color is different from what they already know. After several interviews, I added and excluded images to take a further step on my research. In total, for the first set of experiment, I interviewed 41 people who are mostly in their 20 s and 30s and most of them are students. As I have mentioned, this is not intended as a 'scientific research' but rather an 'artistic research'. For me, it was more important to exchange opinions with more people than being selective on interviews by setting certain criteria.

(figure 1)

(figure 2)

(figure 3)

Outcome

The color association is influenced by various matters; cultures, generation and so on. Everyone's favorite colors and reasons are so diverse and complicated. Quiet many people seemed not to care about the meanings of colors than I had expected, and most of the people that I interviewed considered color as a tool to represent themselves. For example, when they thought about their favorite colors, they first came up with their wardrobe and talked about the colors of clothes they have. Of course, it also linked with color's symbol related to culture, religion or general knowledge (such as Red is associated with the rich, green is the color in which eyes can rest.) The fixed perception on the color is held in our brains deeply. I realized that it would be too complicated to get rid of the whole image of the color and see it with a new perspective.

In addition, the emotions people felt on a certain color were contradictory. Certain color-ideas served a very wide range of aesthetic and symbolic purpose; and the same colors or combinations of colors can be shown to have held quite antithetical connotations in different periods and cultures and even at the same time and in the same place (Gage,1999, p.34). Apparently, contradictory reactions on a certain color were observed. For example, some people felt scary and threatening from van Gogh's red image because red is often associated with blood and red is normally considered as a symbol of revolution. On the other hand, some people felt warm by seeing the same picture because red is also a warm color and reminds of the sunset.

One image, two split opinions

What is the most notable of the first experiment was the reactions on the 3 apples image(fig1). Interviewees were asked to choose the first piece to eat among the 3 apples. As I have assumed, most people picked the yellow one because it looked the most natural and they felt the most comfortable on it. However, what triggered my curiosity was people's reactions on the blue and the pink apples. They were repulsed on the blue apple and the pink apple, due to its unconventional mood, but it also stimulated their curiosities. To sum up all the responses on the blue and the pink apples, it looks most different from what they are familiar with, but because of that, some people felt attracted to these apples. It was an interesting discovery which two split opinions, feeling discomfort and attraction, coexisted in one image.

(figure 4)

To test it more, I added a pair of forest images with different colors(fig4) in the interview. I prepared green-colored image representing the natural environment and purple colored image representing an artificial environment and asked them in which environment they would want to stay. There are 2 main purposes of this question. As I checked in colored apple image, I wanted to check how people would feel different emotions when the color is changed from what they are used to. During the beginning of the experiment, I found out that people rather felt odd or interested in the images when the colors of nature are changed to unusual or artificial colors which are rarely seen in nature. In addition, if the apple is an object we can eat, this forest is an environment in which we can stay. It was intended to see how people would react to different features.

Although most of the people chose the yellow apple which arouses stable mood, over 70 % of people picked the purple one which interviewees knew that it is unusual. They were more curious and found it more intriguing. Whereas the green forest was described as it brings comfort and relaxed feeling but it is too normal and boring to explore. The purple one was depicted as a place where people become curious. Obviously, it looks not conventional and its artificial visual provokes unfamiliarity, people feel attracted to it. Some said that these images could be seen as day and night, and some people picked the purple one because it is dark. At least, I found out that rather than the bright one, the dark environment evokes more curious or odd feelings.

My interviewees who were trying to tell their emotions frankly toward the edited images seemed to feel weird but amazed at the power of colors. It was actually their first time to deeply consider about the colors to be such strong influencer on the mood of the images. I found it interesting that it is actually possible to produce visuals evoking discomfort feeling while being attractive at the same time with unfamiliarity by using colors. Lee said in her book, "Unfamiliarity causes discomfort. But it is this discomforted unfamiliarity which makes cliched art and the world to have more room for new creativity." (2018, p.185)
By changing the natural color of the apple to the artificial one, people felt discomfort but it led them to try one out if possible. Through altering colors, the seemingly boring environment turned into the attractive place triggering people's curiosities.

Ch 1.2 The Second Experiment: <Which one do you feel attracted the most?>

To analyze the first experiment, the apple is a consuming object and the forest is a place where people can stay. According to different using features of the objects, the emotions are influenced differently to the colors. This might explain the result that most of the people chose the yellow apple since it looks the most natural, while, the people wanted to stay in the purple forest looking unusual. When we see only the color apart from the objects, the blue apple and the purple forest do not have enough influential arousing a certain emotion and leading to imagine beyond the surface of visible things. However, when we see an image interacting of colors and objects, seeming not to match well, can think about the relation between them and it can reach to the unfamiliarity.

I wanted to develop this concept for the second experiment, based on Gestalt psychology, focused on how individuals subjectively experience and organize their perceptions. Our eyes are not like a camera or a window. We do not see the world objectively. Rather, what we see is interpreted and given meaning by the observer, based on memories, expectations, beliefs, values, fears, assumptions, emotional states, and more. (Sabar,2013) Following this theory, I came up with the primary and secondary layers of the chosen objects. To be specific, the primary layer of an apple would be its appearance with different colors and secondary layer would be the tasting or consuming the apple. As a development of this, I came up with VCR(fig5), which the primary layer would be the rectangularly shaped appearance and the secondary layer would be the video that it contains. Likewise, the drink(fig6) was chosen. For hands(fig7), I wanted to change the second layer to be associated with "touch" feeling and poodle(fig8) for empathy feeling.

As I found out that people easily feel repulsed to un-natural colors, I only used artificial colors (mostly, neon colors). I wanted to explore how the interaction between visuals and features of the objects would be interpreted and what story could be imagined. I believed that this experiment will be one of the phases helping me to find the leverage point which the unfamiliarity turns into attractiveness.

Outcome
Drink

(figure 6)

-5 different colored drinks were shown and the question was 'which one would you want to drink?'. Majority people were reluctant to taste them as it is consumed and can cause harm on their health. Even, people seemed not attracted to all kinds of colored drinks since they see the image based on their memories, for example, they reminded of dish washer detergent which is not edible. In addition, they tended to choose the least chemical looking ones, for example, people who picked the yellow one relating it to a glass of lemonade.
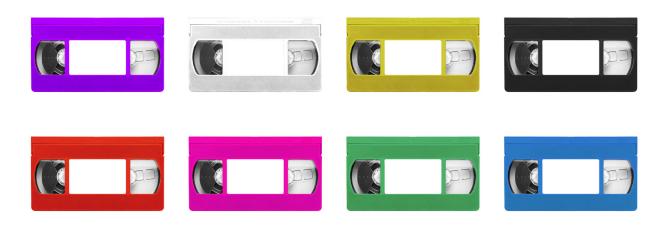
Poodle

(figure 8)

-5 different colored poodle were shown and the questions were 'Which dog looks the happiest?' and 'Which dog looks the saddest?'

Reactions on poodle image were more positive in comparison to the drinks. It might be because poodle's secondary layer is not consuming which can affect one's health. However, interestingly, people thought colored poodles are weird but attractive. I assumed that there are 2 main reasons. Even though the colors on it looks unfamiliar, people considered the distinctive feature of the object more. One interviewee (Joke van Driel, 20, studying Graphic Design) said "Dogs are cute, they are always nice to see. It is just a bit weird to see yellow, pink or other colored dogs but it is funny." She felt strange to the artificial colored dogs, but she interpreted the image based on her personal emotional state on the dogs. In addition, when the combination of the color and object is distinct, it can be turned into attractiveness. Another interviewee (Angela Grigolato, 23, studying photography) said that "I never seen such colored dogs. If I see the dogs on the street, I would stop to watch them. Because they look nice." She felt attracted to the image because of the fact that she never has seen it. The objects in the image which are hardly seen or never exists seemed to be the main trigger.

VCR

(figure 5)

-8 different colored VCR were shown and the question was 'Which one would you want to watch?' and 'What genre would it be?'.

What I found from VCR was that the secondary layer of Video does not affect their choices. The genre that they stated was what they like, not considering the colors. However, I found out that bright and vivid color stand out among other colors, and this caused people to choose them.

My initial idea on VCR was to find out the appropriate range to find out the triggering layer. The result shows that people rather are not triggered with the genre of movies, which can be seen thorough another object.

Hands

-5 different colored hands were shown and the question was 'Which one would you want to shake hands?'.

The reactions on hands images I found unexpected is that some people linked the different colored hands to diverse race of people. Thus, the idea choosing a hand wanting to touch is, otherwise, left room for interpretation of discrimination (especially racial discrimination). In this case, the story can be imagined from the image could go too complicated and it could be associated it with social issues which I did not intend. Even though my initial idea was to set the layer as feeling but, as the research is for, turned out to be added on the next step. The point would be included in the criteria for choosing the layers: not to be related to social issues related with colors, such as discrimination, symbolizing political parties or even supporting a football team.

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